AGENDA ITEM V C

PROGRESS REPORT ON CONDITIONALLY APPROVED PROGRAM

LOUISIANA TECHNICAL COLLEGE -ASCENSION

ASSOCIATE OF APPLIED SCIENCE IN PROCESS TECHNOLOGY

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At its meeting of September 24, 2003, the Board of Regents took the following action:

> **Conditional approval is granted for the proposed A.A.S. program in Process Control Technology (CIP Code 15.0699) at Louisiana Technical College-Ascension, effective immediately. By August 1, 2004, the College shall submit to the Commissioner of Higher Education a report addressing weaknesses and problematic areas identified in the staff summary and analysis.**

Subsequently, the Regents approved the following in October 2004:

> **The Board of Regents receives the AY 2003-04 Progress Report from Louisiana Technical College - Ascension Campus relative to the implementation of the A.A.S. in Process Technology. By September 1, 2005, the institution shall submit a progress report to the Commissioner of Higher Education addressing concerns sited in the staff summary. In particular, this report should contain significant evidence of substantial and sustained student interest in the program.**

STAFF SUMMARY

The A.A.S. in Process Technology (P-Tech) was implemented in Fall 2003. The most recent report on the program was received from the LTC-Ascension in August 2005. Additional information requested by the staff was received in September.

1. Need

A strategic planning meeting of the P-Tech Advisory board, attended by representatives of industry, LTC district and schools, community colleges, local school system and local economic development organizations was held in March 2005. Renewed backing from industry and the area for the P-Tech program support the continued need for the program and resulted in recommendations to improve the program. Industry personnel indicated that their employers are in the chemical business and support the LTC Ascension campus as a training facility.

The program underwent an environmental audit March 21, 2005, by a team composed of industry, local P-Tech programs, area economic development agencies and the local school system

representatives. At that time, the team found only two goals remained unmet: 1) establishing contacts in all of the human resource (HR) departments at area plants to become acquainted with the personnel trainers; and 2) offering extension courses at night.

HR personnel from three area plants serve on the P-Tech advisory board. LTC-Ascension plans to have HR representatives from other organizations come to campus to talk with the students about what that company wants in an employee and to discuss staffing needs with faculty. The institution states that this goal should be complete by the November 15, 2005, Advisory Board meeting.

In a telephone conversation with staff on September 22, 2005, the campus dean indicated that night courses for the program are offered on the campus as of that date, indicating that goal has been accomplished.

Data obtained in the summer of 2005 and provided by the Louisiana Chemical Association which addresses the need for process technicians is indicated below. Slightly over half of the seventy member companies responded to the survey.

Demand for Process Operators: LCA Member Companies Only

Dates	**Region 1** BRCC	**Region 2** LTC Ascen	**Region 3** LTC Riv Parishes	**Region 4** SOWELA/ McNeese	**Region 6** NO area	**Region 7** Outliers	**All Regions**
June 05-06	117	35	28	125	13	13	**331**
June 06-07	159	23	17	116	18	5	**338**
June 07-08	316	32	95	92	24	11	**570**
June 08-09	301	44	17	94	28	5	**489**
June 09-10	326	57	20	116	33	27	**579**
Total	**1219**	**191**	**177**	**543**	**116**	**61**	**2307**

The projections represent only sixty per cent of the LCA total membership and do not include data from three very large companies which would significantly increase the number of vacancies.

Additionally, the oil and gas as well as exploration and production industries located in south Louisiana, both of which are heavily dependent on process operators, report an aging workforce and worker shortages. Both are involved with the statewide PTEC initiative and support the curriculum. The Oil and Gas E&P industry in the Greater New Orleans Area estimated a need for an additional 400+ operators during the next twelve months.

2. Students

The institution indicates an increase in students enrolled in its P-Tech programs, as indicated below.

Students	Spring 2004	Sum 2004	Fall 2004	Spring 2005	Sum 2005	Fall 2005
New	15	5	16	17	16	45
# Scholarships	2		1	1	5	9
Graduates	2					1

Discussions at the State P-Tech Education Committee meetings indicate a shared concern that students complete technical coursework, but not required General Education coursework. Attention was given to sequencing of P-Tech and Gen Ed courses, resulting in a decision to disallow students from continuing in the program unless they have completed appropriate Gen Ed courses. This approach was adopted to increase the number of students completing the degree requirements. The institution anticipates that the addition of a full time- faculty member for the program should facilitate student enrollment in courses needed to satisfy degree requirements for the A.A.S. in Process Technology in a timely manner.

LTC-Ascension reports that many students complete several P-Tech courses but leave before completing requirements for the A.A.S. degree. Industry however has stated a preference for associate-degreed personnel and does not support a Technical Diploma as an exit point for this curriculum. Availability of technical classes in the evening and general education courses on-line may enable more students to complete the program. The Center for the Advancement of Process Technology (CAPT) now offers seven P-Tech courses on line. The computer literacy course instructor at the LTC-Ascension is presently teaching students how to use the Blackboard software program and other skills necessary for on-line courses.

Career Builders, a non-profit organization which administers scholarships for P-Tech students indicates that the graduation rate is 50% for scholarship recipients, compared to 35% for non-recipients. Students are required to complete at least eighteen credit hours per calendar year, with half generated from general education courses. This prevents students from completing only technical courses first, then struggling and leaving the program prior to graduation.

3. Faculty

A full-time faculty member with a degree in education and teaching experience was hired this semester. He recently retired from the petrochemical industry after twenty eight years as a process operator. Prior to the beginning of classes, he received two days of professional development with other P-Tech instructors in the state and attended the State P-Tech Education Committee and campus P-Tech Advisory Board meetings. One adjunct faculty remains involved in teaching classes during the day; another adjunct is responsible for offering evening courses.

The institution reported that a coordinator for all LTC Process Technology programs was appointed, which should facilitate coordination and strengthening of programs.

4. Facilities/Equipment/Resources

LTC-Ascension reports acquisition of equipment for P-Tech courses as indicated below:

Distillation Trainer w/stand	$ 12,500
Simulation Software for distillation, crude unit & boiler operations	5,000
"Glass lab" simulation and computers	60,000
Valve Cut Aways	1,995
	$79,495

An E-simulation "glass lab", at a cost of $8,000 has been requested this year through Tech Prep fees. In July of 2005, a contract was signed for construction the additional glass lab, which is anticipated in November 2005.

5. Funding

LTC-Ascension received donations of $10,000 for advertisement of the P-Tech and Industrial Instrumentation programs from Shell Oil Company and $5,000 from Shell Chemical of Geismar for the P-Tech program. Additionally, eight scholarships have been awarded this year by the Ascension Parish Chemical Industry; five of the eight recipients are P- Tech students at LTC-Ascension.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The A.A.S. program in Process Technology at LTC Ascension continues to develop. Enrollment has increased and includes scholarship recipients; a full-time faculty member for the program is in place; new equipment has been acquired, plans are underway for necessary construction; support of industry and the community is evident; expansion of class offerings to evening hours has begun; some courses are available through distance learning.

It appears that the program is now attracting a sufficient number of students; however, numbers of graduates are woefully low. If industrial demand projections are accurate, there seems to be a significant disconnect between demand for training and need for graduates. The College has taken some recent steps to encourage greater numbers of graduates, but it is as yet unclear whether these efforts will be successful. This same scenario also troubles other PTech programs, but not to the extent that exists at LTC-Ascension. Careful monitoring of this program should be continued to see whether an AAS program truly serves any purpose. If numbers of graduates continues to be low, then consideration should be given to reconceptualizing this program as either a technical diploma or certificate.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee receive the AY 2004-2005 report relative to the implementation of the A.A.S. in Process Technology at the Louisiana Technical College-Ascension. By September 1, 2006, the institution shall submit a progress report to the Commissioner of Higher Education documenting numbers of program graduates and the placement of students who left the program for employment.